





## *Stonewall, Texas*

Dear Friends,

The Hill Country has been my home since 1934 when Lyndon and I were married. I fell in love with the beauty of its landscape carpeted with bluebonnets and Indian paintbrush, teeming with deer and abundant bird life. But my strongest bond to the Hill Country has been its people.

The Hill Country is where my husband's ancestors pioneered and put down roots. Lyndon was born and is buried on the LBJ Ranch. His formative years were spent in Johnson City and that is where his political career began in earnest, continuing a Johnson family legacy of public service. In 1951, the Ranch became our refuge from the demands of political life — where Lyndon could draw strength from the land. The LBJ Ranch has always been a happy home filled with love and family. And yet, it was here that some of the most influential people of our time — politicians, heads-of-state, world leaders — gathered to seek answers to the problems of the hour. The “Texas White House,” as the LBJ Ranch was called during Lyndon's administration, and the Hill Country became part of our public identity.

As we reflected on the presidential years, Lyndon and I felt strongly that this place should be preserved for the American people. There could be no better custodians of this little piece of history than the National Park Service and the State of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. In his retirement years, Lyndon spent time working with representatives of both agencies to express his vision for the parks and create the compatible relationship that endures today.

We wanted the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park to preserve the historic properties associated with Lyndon's life and to present a balanced account of the history of his times. It was important that the Ranch continue to thrive as a working ranch, not become a sterile relic of the past. We also wanted the LBJ Ranch to be our home for the remaining years left to us, and then to be open to all who wished to visit. These are the goals we set in 1969 and the NPS honors them to this day.

As I write these words nearly thirty years later, much has changed. The NPS has broadened its stewardship responsibilities to become partners in many local and regional initiatives outside the traditional park “boundaries.” This General Management Plan reflects the involvement of many of our friends and neighbors throughout the land, and I gratefully salute all of you who have contributed your time and talent in charting a course for the future while honoring the commitments of the past.

*Lady Bird Johnson*



## SUMMARY



Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park preserves the birthplace, boyhood home, and ranch of the 36th president of the United States as well as several other structures associated with the president and his ancestors. Two districts, one consisting of the LBJ Ranch and the other consisting of properties in Johnson City, total 674.15 acres. The park researches, preserves, and interprets the life and heritage of the president, and, in association with the adjacent Lyndon B. Johnson State Historical Park, provides a variety of opportunities to experience the local and regional context that shaped the last frontier president, informed his policies and programs, and defined his legacy.

This *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* presents three alternatives for management, use, and development of the national historical park in ways that will best serve visitors while preserving the historic character, structures, and landscape. A *Master Plan* was published in 1977 but is now almost fully implemented. Those items not completed or underway are either outdated or no longer desirable. A new general management plan for the national historical park will guide park management for the next 10 to 15 years.

The alternatives were formulated to address problems and management concerns related to the future operation of the LBJ Ranch district following Mrs. Johnson's passing, as well as concerns related to visitor use, resource management, and facility development. These issues and concerns were identified during scoping meetings in Johnson City during May 1997 and January 1998 and during meetings among park staff.

The alternatives, briefly described here, range from a continuation of existing conditions to a comprehensive rethinking of the management, interpretation, and operation of the park. Alternatives 2 and 3 have been designed to protect and preserve exceptional resources and to meet identified planning objectives, or as defined in this document, *mission goals*. These *mission goals* reflect and expand on the site's purpose established in the authorizing legislation (Public Law 91-134, December 2, 1969, as amended), which is to preserve in public ownership "historically significant properties associated with the life of Lyndon B. Johnson."

All alternatives provide a two-phased approach to management and development of the national historical park. The first phase reflects actions that could be implemented immediately and the second phase those actions following the departure of the Secret Service.

Alternative 1, the no-action alternative, describes a continuation of the present management course. It provides the baseline to which all other alternatives are compared. It does not allow for the opening of the Texas White House to visitors except on a special occasion basis. It continues the bus tour at the ranch and provides no visitor transportation into the settlement. It maintains all historic structures in their present condition and provides only minimal upgraded programs. There would be no additional staff.

Alternative 2 reflects a modest increase in the level of park maintenance, interpretation, and administration. It allows a limited schedule of visitation at the Texas White House and changes the bus tour to a shuttle system. It provides a higher level of protection for park historic resources and expands educational outreach into the local community. Minimal additional staff would be added.

Alternative 3, the National Park Service's proposed action, describes a comprehensive change in the overall visitor experience of the ranch with the Texas White House open on a regularly scheduled basis, the bus tour

becoming a shuttle system, and new facilities for visitor contact, maintenance, ranching, and park interpretive staff. In Johnson City, the visitor experience of the settlement would become much more unique and educational. Staffing would be significantly upgraded.

Estimated development and staffing costs for the three alternatives are provided. Potential environmental impacts on the archeological and historic resources, soils, water resources and water quality, floodplains, economy and social environment, and visitor use/experience and interpretation are also included.

The *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* will be on review for 60 days. A final plan (or an abbreviated document if few comments are received) will be prepared that responds to or incorporates public comments on the draft document. After a 30-day no action period, a record of decision will be prepared and circulated to interested parties. This will complete the National Environmental Policy Act process.